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Panda ExpressŽ Orange Flavored Chicken As far as Chinese food goes, I think the stuff these guys throw together in sizzling woks is surprisingly tasty for a takeout chain. This dish is something of a twist on the traditional sweet and sour chicken commonly found at Chinese restaurants over the years. This popular menu item has a delicious, citrus-laced, tangy-sweet sauce with a spicy nip the regulars find truly addictive. The chain claims to cook all of its food in woks, including sauces. But this homegrown version will work fine, whether you go for a wok, or not.

Sauce

1 1/2 cups water

2 tablespoons orange juice

**1 cup packed dark
brown sugar**

1/3 cup rice vinegar

2 1/2 tablespoons soy sauce

1/4 cup plus 1 teaspoon lemon juice 1
teaspoon minced water chestnuts 1/2
teaspoon minced fresh ginger 1/4
teaspoon minced garlic

1 rounded teaspoon chopped green onion
1/4 teaspoon crushed red pepper flakes
5 teaspoons cornstarch

2 teaspoons arrowroot

3 tablespoons water

Chicken

4 chicken breast fillets

1 cup ice water

1 egg

1/4 teaspoon baking soda

1/4 teaspoon salt

1 1/2 cups unsifted cake flour

2 to 4 cups vegetable oil

1. Combine all of the sauce ingredients - except the cornstarch, arrowroot, and 3 tablespoons of water - in a small saucepan over high heat. Stir often while bringing mixture to a boil. When sauce reaches a boil, remove it from heat and allow it to cool a bit, uncovered.

2. Slice chicken breasts into bite-size chunks. Remove exactly 1

cup of the marinade from the pan and pour it over the chicken in a large resealable plastic bag or other container

which allows the chicken to be completely covered with the marinade. The chicken should marinate for at least a couple hours. Cover the remaining sauce and leave it to cool until the chicken is ready.

3. When chicken has marinated, preheat 2 inches of vegetable oil in a wok or skillet to 350 degrees.

4. Combine cornstarch with arrowroot in a small bowl, then add 3

tablespoons of water. Stir until cornstarch and arrowroot have dissolved. Pour this mixture into the sauce and set the pan over high heat. When sauce begins to bubble and

thicken, cover and remove it from heat.

5. Beat together the ice water and egg in a medium bowl. Add baking soda and salt.

6. Add $\frac{3}{4}$ cup of the flour and stir with a fork just until the flour is blended into the mixture. The batter should still be lumpy.

7. Sprinkle another $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of flour on top of the batter and mix with only one or two strokes. Most of the new flour will still be floating on top of the mixture. Put the remaining flour ($\frac{1}{2}$ cup) into a separate medium bowl.

8. Dip each piece of chicken first into

the flour, then into the batter. Let some of the batter drip off and then slide the chicken into the oil. Fry up to 1/2 of the chicken pieces at a time for 3 to 4 minutes, or until golden brown. Flip the chicken over halfway through the cooking time. Remove the chicken to a rack or paper towels to drain.

9. As the chicken cooks, reheat the sauce left covered on the stove.

Stir occasionally.

10. When all of the chicken is done, pour it into a large bowl, and cover with the thickened sauce. Stir gently until all of the pieces are well coated.

Serves four.